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## INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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S-E-C-R-E-T

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY USSR (Turkmen SSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT Miscellaneous Military Information  
on Ashkhabad *MA*

DATE DISTR. 27 June 1960

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REFERENCES RD

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DATE OF  
INFO.PLACE &  
DATE ACQ.

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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. *[redacted]* report containing miscellaneous information on the 55th Artillery Regiment of the First Motorized Rifle Division *[redacted]*

2. The report also contains *[redacted]* data on military personalities, information on the role of the military in the 1948 Ashkhabad earthquake, and an annotated sketch of the town of Ashkhabad. /

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SUBJECT: Miscellaneous, Information on Ashkhabad  
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1. The First Motorized Rifle Division (Pervaya Motostrelkovaya Divizya), which was subordinate to one of the armies of the Central Asian Military District (Srednie-Azyatskiy Voyenniy Okrug), had its headquarters in Ashkhabad [N 37-57, E 58-23], capital of the Turkmen SSR. One of the division's regiments, the 55th Artillery Regiment, belonged until 1947-1948 to the reserves of the Supreme Command of the Soviet Army. This regiment consisted of three batteries (Divizyony): one of 152 mm howitzers, one of 100 mm antitank guns, and one signals and reconnaissance unit. The regiment also had its own

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training school for noncommissioned officers (Serzhantskaya Shkola).

2. Until the end of 1948, the 55th Artillery Regiment had been stationed in a military camp near the settlement of Bikrava, about nine kilometers from Ashkhabad. As a result of the violent earthquake of December 1948, all the installations at the camp were destroyed, including the brick buildings with walls one meter thick. The regiment was on maneuvers in the Tashkent area at the time, so that there was only a 40-man detail in charge of the camp and equipment. After the earthquake the regiment was moved to Kagan  $\sqrt{N}$  39-43, E 64-337, near Bukhara  $\sqrt{N}$  39-48, E 64-257, taking over a camp which happened to be unoccupied at that time. A year later it returned to Ashkhabad and was quartered in a camp located at the entrance to the town, on the west side of the road from Kizyl-Arvat  $\sqrt{N}$  38-58, E 56-157. Until 1950 the men were accommodated in large tent camps. In addition to the 55th regiment, a motorcycle battalion and an antitank battalion were stationed in the same area.

3. The earthquake mentioned above occurred at about midnight on 5 December 1948. It lasted about 30 seconds and consisted of alternate horizontal and vertical tremors. Its seismographic rating was nine. The town of Ashkhabad was completely destroyed, except

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for the electric power station which showed only a few cracks. In addition, there was general damage within a radius of 70 kilometers. The quake took a heavy toll of lives in the town; according to local estimates, 150,000 persons were killed and 12,000 injured out of a total population of 220,000.

4. On the morning after the earthquake, the commander of the Central Asian Military District, General Petrov (fnu), arrived on the scene, declared martial law and announced that he was assuming command of the rescue and clearance operations. For this purpose, many military units and a great quantity of equipment were immediately brought into the town. One of the results of the earthquake was the breaking up of concentration camps and prisons, and when the escaped prisoners began to plunder private and government property, the commanding general issued a special order to his troops to safeguard this property. At several points on the outskirts of town the army put up tent camps for the civilian population who had lost their homes, as well as for their own accommodation. Inside the town the army established military kitchens which provided free meals to the population for a period of two weeks. A special headquarters for the rescue operations was set up by General Petrov in

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the town - also under canvas - which was in direct radio communication with Moscow for the duration of the operations. These operations lasted five to six months, during the course of which the army, with the help of military transport, cleared the town of all ruins. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the town began in mid-1949 and proceeded at a rapid pace.

5. About 40 km west of Ashkhabad there was the summer resort of Firyuza [N 37-56, E 58-04] which had a civilian airfield with regular air traffic in the summer months. Halfway between Ashkhabad and Firyuza there was a camp occupied by a Frontier Guard unit which was referred to by the soldiers as "Komendatura".

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Personalities

6. Col. Akselrod (fnu) was deputy commander in charge of political affairs of the 1st Motorized Rifle Division in Ashkhabad.

7. The following officers served with the 55th Artillery Regiment in Ashkhabad:

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a. Col. Abramian (fnu), commanding officer of the regiment,

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b. Maj. Meir Davidovich Matushenko, who had been a  
battery commander in the regiment

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c. Capt. Medvedev (fmu), quartermaster officer

d. Capt. Oriayev (fmu), a battery commander in the  
regiment

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e. Lt. Col. Steshenkov (fmu), chief of staff of the regi-  
ment

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f. Lt. Col. Yefremov (fmu), deputy commander of the regi-  
ment

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\* \* \* \*

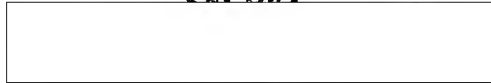
Attached is a sketch of the town of Ashkhabad.

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Attachment

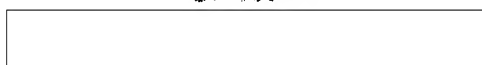


Legend to Sketch of Ashkhabad

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1. Military camp (artillery units)
2. Race track
3. Silk factory
4. Town power station
5. Textile factory
6. Grain stores (Zagotzerno)
7. Municipal park
8. Stadium
9. University buildings
10. Prison
11. Frontier Guard headquarters
12. Garrison hospital
13. Broadcasting station
14. Infantry camp
15. Officers club
16. Public park (in the care of military personnel from the adjoining officers club)
17. Medical institute
18. Republican hospital

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19. Infantry officers school (for national minorities)
20. Supreme Soviet of the Turkmen SSR
  - A. Prospekt Stalina
  - B. Pervomayskaya
  - C. Gogol Street

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*Attachment 2*

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ASHKHABAD